



## Protecting and Restoring Puget Sound

*"Puget Sound plays a central role in our culture, and it's easy to mistake the stunning sunsets, beautiful beaches and scenic views as evidence of a healthy environment."*

Governor Chris Gregoire  
December 15, 2005

### ***Among Governor Gregoire's strategies for saving Puget Sound:***

- ✓ Clean up toxic sites
- ✓ Restore habitats
- ✓ Make State Parks models of Sound-friendly development
- ✓ Prevent oil spills and contamination of lands
- ✓ Build a new partnership to engage many more people in the effort to safeguard the future of the Sound

One of Governor Gregoire's favorite childhood memories is of fishing and boating on the waters of Puget Sound.

The Governor is one of millions of Washingtonians with great memories of Puget Sound. But there's no guarantee that future generations of Washingtonians will be able to experience the same moments. Beneath its blue waters, Puget Sound is in trouble. A few alarming examples:

- The orca whale recently was listed as an endangered species, while salmon and 38 other native species are at risk.
- Marine birds have declined by nearly half in the Puget Sound region since the 1970s, some species by as much as 90 percent.
- More than 5,700 acres of aquatic lands exceed safe levels of toxic contamination.
- Hood Canal has a growing dead zone due to pollution that robs the water of oxygen and kills marine life.
- Approximately 30,000 acres, or nearly 20 percent, of commercial shellfish beds have been closed to harvest since 1980.

The growth of our cities and a vibrant economy – while producing great benefits for society – have had unintended consequences for Puget Sound. Roads, buildings, parking lots and structures such as dikes and bulkheads dramatically have altered the natural landscape and reduced its ability to sustain life. Toxic chemicals have built up in the Sound's sediments and urban bays. These chemicals have accumulated in fish, seals and the orca, and may already be impacting human health.

For too long, experts have charted declines among key indicators of the health of the Sound. If these trends are not reduced soon, soon, more of Puget Sound will become dead zones where fish and wildlife cannot live. The Governor is determined to reverse the declines.

Many people are hard at work protecting and restoring Puget Sound from problems such as failing septic systems, oil spills and polluted runoff from highways, cities and suburbs. But it's not enough. Reaching the goal of a healthy Puget Sound now and for future generations will require expanding the scale and intensity of our efforts.

The Governor knows that a strong leader is needed, and she intends to lead. But 20 years of personal experience on this issue has taught her that government cannot achieve this alone. To safeguard the health and beauty of Puget Sound, everyone in the Puget Sound basin must be engaged in a mission of shared stewardship.

## Establishing the 'Puget Sound Partnership'

To help achieve her vision of broadly shared stewardship, the Governor is enlisting some of the region's leading citizens to form the nucleus of a new public/private entity – the Puget Sound Partnership. Governor Gregoire has asked nine regional leaders to provide initial leadership for this effort. They will study experiences from other large ecosystem protection efforts around the country and engage an extensive cross-section of Puget Sound citizens, businesses and government representatives in conversations about how together we can best protect and restore Puget Sound and its full diversity of life.

Initial recommendations from the Partnership are expected by June 15, 2006, with more complete recommendations by Oct. 15, 2006, supported by any necessary legislative changes in the 2007 legislative session. Partners are:

- **Chris Gregoire** – Governor, State of Washington
- **Norm Dicks** – U.S. Representative (D-Wash.)
- **Mark Emmert, Ph.D.** – President, University of Washington
- **Kathy Fletcher** – Executive Director, People for Puget Sound
- **Billy Frank, Jr.** – Chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
- **Mike Shelby** – Executive Director, Western Washington Agricultural Association
- **Ron Sims** – King County Executive
- **Bill Taylor** – Vice President, Taylor Shellfish Farms, Inc.
- **William Ruckelshaus** – Chair, Salmon Recovery Funding Board, EPA Administrator, 1973-75 and 1983-85
- **Colin Moseley** – President, Green Diamond Company, Chairman, Simpson Resource Company

The Partnership is charged with:

1. Developing a set of recommendations for the Governor, the Legislature and Congress to preserve the health of Puget Sound by 2020 and ensure that marine and fresh waters support healthy populations of native species, as well as water quality and quantity to support both human needs and ecosystem functions.
2. Engaging citizens, watershed groups, local governments, tribes, state and federal agencies, businesses and the environmental community in the development of recommendations supporting the implementation of the 14 community-based watershed efforts and the Puget Sound Conservation and Recovery Plan.
3. Leading development of a campaign to engage a broad cross-section of citizens in the work of protecting and restoring Puget Sound
4. Assessing current organizational structures for protection and restoration of the fresh and marine watersheds of Puget Sound, as well as the recovery of salmon, orca and other threatened species, and recommending a structure for an ongoing public/private partnership to steward the ecosystem back to health and protect it for the long-term.
5. Reviewing current and potential funding sources for protection and restoration of the ecosystem and, where possible, making recommendations for the priority of expenditures to achieve the desired 2020 outcomes.
6. Recommending the best way to organize and apply broad-based scientific knowledge and capacity to set and meet goals.

The Governor believes a new, broadly based public-private partnership is a critical and necessary evolution of efforts to save Puget Sound. A partnership will better engage citizens, the private sector, tribes and local, state and federal government agencies in a unified effort, and ultimately bring with it greater funding, public support and accountability to get the job done.

## Significant Actions in the Governor's 2006 Budget

While the Partnership is digging deep into the issues, Washington State must speed up efforts on the ground now. The Governor's 2006 supplemental budget proposal includes \$42 million in new funding to the state's "2005-2007 Puget Sound Conservation and Recovery" plan to accelerate cleanup, restoration and protection. Almost all of the money is from state and local toxics accounts. It will be used to expedite actions including:

### Clean Up Polluted Sites in and near Puget Sound

The Governor's supplemental budget includes \$21.6 million to accelerate clean up of contaminated aquatic lands and nearby uplands. When toxic pollutants get into Puget Sound, they settle to the bottom. From there, they work their way into the food chain and ultimately can threaten the entire ecosystem. Large portions of Puget Sound have been degraded by decades of municipal and industrial activities.

The Department of Ecology has identified more than 5,700 acres of sediments in the Sound that exceed safe pollution standards. State-owned aquatic lands are among the contaminated sites that have seen only sporadic cleanup efforts. Ecology also has identified 115 contaminated upland sites within a half-mile of the Puget Sound shoreline that need cleaning up. All of these sources release toxic chemicals that can build up, get into the food chain and damage marine organisms, orcas, seals, fish and eventually humans.

### Prevent Oil Spills and Toxic Contamination

The Governor takes significant steps to better protect against oil spills. She is seeking legislation to require major oil-transport companies to train and conduct drills on spill prevention and cleanup. The Governor also wants it made clear that the Department of Ecology has authority to conduct inspections of oil transfers. And she wants new authority to regulate tanker trucks that refuel boats from docks. The activity is unregulated and on the rise.

The Governor's supplemental budget also includes \$1.5 million to prevent oil spills and hazardous material spills. The threat of a major oil spill in the Sound is real, and better regulation of companies that transport and transfer oil in our waters will reduce that risk. But it isn't only the major spills that threaten the Sound. The smaller spills add up and are a real concern because oil and other toxic substances kill marine life and linger in the food chain. Hazardous substance spills are increasing. The Governor's plan:

- **Implements an Oil Transfer Inspection Program.** Ecology will establish a state oil spill transfer inspection program in response to legislation passed in 2004 requiring additional measures to prevent spills during the transfer of oil between oil tankers, cargo vessels, shoreline facilities, tank trucks and oil barges. This program provides for the inspection of 35 percent of all transfers.
- **Reduces the risks of hazardous material spills.** Ecology will employ additional spill responders in Bellingham to respond quickly to spills in Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, Island and San Juan counties, which recently have experienced an increase of 300 spills a year. Ecology also will provide technical help to businesses to redesign systems to eliminate or substantially reduce the production and use of toxic substances.
- **Provides critical spill response resources.** Ecology's spills program will place booms, absorbent materials and other spill response equipment at 40 critical locations around Puget Sound. The equipment is to be within hours of a spill in small communities or tribal areas. In 2005, spill response equipment in Gig Harbor enabled local responders to contain thousands of gallons of oil and fuel from 50 boats destroyed in a marina fire, preventing release into Puget Sound and saving more than \$1 million in estimated clean-up costs.

On another front, the Governor's supplemental budget includes funds to help businesses reduce their use of toxic substances in manufacturing, which will reduce the likelihood of those toxins finding their way to the Sound.

### **Restore Estuarine and Salmon Habitats**

The Governor's supplemental budget includes an additional \$3 million to restore estuaries and salmon habitat, working with agencies, tribes and other groups involved in these areas. These agencies and groups will complete priority estuary and salmon recovery projects that have the potential to be matched with federal funds through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. State funds will also be used to match federal funds, leveraging \$750,000 from the Army Corps to develop restoration actions for the future.

### **Make State Parks Models of Sound-Friendly Development**

The Governor's budget includes \$4 million to improve environmental performance at state parks and to build the foundation for setting an example at all Puget Sound parks about how to best care for Puget Sound. In the coming year, failing wastewater treatment systems will be replaced at Twanoh, Dosewallips, Ft. Casey, Ft. Ebey, Birch Bay and Sequim Bay state parks. At the same time, design work will begin to restore nearshore and freshwater habitat, implement low-impact development techniques to minimize stormwater runoff, and install advanced wastewater treatment systems.

### **Help Homeowners Save the Sound**

Individuals and businesses in the Puget Sound region operate an estimated 472,000 septic systems. Many of them are aging and in disrepair, allowing human wastes to reach the Sound. This pollution has forced the closure of shellfish beds to protect consumers, which also creates economic hardship for shellfish growers. Septic systems can also contribute to nutrient pollution, which can deplete oxygen from the water and cause hypoxic or dead zones. The Governor's supplemental budget includes \$6.5 million to provide loans to homeowners to repair and replace failing septic systems. The Department of Ecology, working with the Puget Sound Action Team and the Department of Health, will expand a loan program and add a grant program to provide grants and low-interest loans to homeowners throughout the Sound to replace and repair failing septic systems. These loans will be administered through a private lending institution to be selected. Low-income applicants will be given preference.

### **Remove Derelict Creosote Logs**

Logs coated with creosote steadily can leach the chemical into water and sediment, killing marine life. The Governor's supplemental budget includes \$2 million to remove derelict creosote logs from Puget Sound shorelines. The Department of Natural Resources will contract with various entities and tribes to remove the logs. An estimated 3,300 tons of creosote logs will be removed annually with clean-ups targeted in Olympia, Port Orchard, Bremerton, eastern Jefferson County, Port Angeles, Bellingham, Anacortes, the Everett/Snohomish Estuary and Tacoma.

### **Local Stormwater Project Grants**

Local governments are encouraged to embark on innovative projects to control stormwater. The Governor's supplemental budget includes \$2.5 million for grants to local governments for projects – such as natural drainage systems, green roofs, permeable pavement and rain gardens – to reduce stormwater impacts on Puget Sound.

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